The IDVA Update



Mitch Daniels - Governor Tom Applegate - Director

Applegate - Directo

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The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs Newsletter

Winter Edition



Tom Applegate Named Director IDVA

Tom Applegate, long time Huntington County Service officer and former president of the Indiana County Veterans Service Officer Association, has been named Director of the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs.

Tom brings over 10 years of County Service Officer experience along with his service in the active duty Air Force and the Indiana Army National Guard to his position at IDVA. Tom's dedication to veterans and veterans' issues are well known and respected throughout the State. Governor Daniels said that in selecting Tom he had chosen a man he believed would vigorously and immediately pursue the best for veterans in Indiana.

Welcome aboard Director Applegate.



Tom Applegate flanked by Governor Daniels and State Representative Dan Leonard of Huntington County at Tom's appointment press conference.



Jim Nicholson Named Secretary of USDVA

R. James "Jim" Nicholson was nominated by President George W. Bush to serve as Secretary of Veterans Affairs on Dec. 9, 2004, and was unanimously confirmed by the Senate on Jan. 26, 2005. He was sworn into office on Feb. 1, 2005.

As Secretary of Veterans Affairs Mr. Nicholson is the principal advocate for veterans in the U.S. government, ensuring that they receive the care, support, recognition and dignity they deserve for their service to our Country. He also directs the Department of Veterans Affairs, the federal government's second largest Cabinet Department, responsible for a nationwide system of health care services, benefits programs, and national cemeteries for America's veterans and dependents. With a budget of more than \$69 billion for fiscal year 2005, VA employs approximately 230,000 people at hundreds of VA medical centers, clinics, nursing homes, benefits offices, and national cemeteries throughout the Country.

Prior to his nomination Mr. Nicholson served as U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, a position he held since 2001, where he became a well-known advocate in Rome for the elevation of human dignity, giving special emphasis to human trafficking, religious freedom, starvation and bio-tech food, HIV/AIDS, and international terrorism. He was knighted by Pope John Paul II in October 2003 for his work representing the U.S. to the Vatican.

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Mr. Nicholson was born in 1938 and grew up on a tenant farm in northwest Iowa in a family of seven children. He is a 1961 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. He served eight years on active duty as a paratrooper and Ranger-qualified Army officer, then 22 years in the Army Reserve, retiring with the rank of Colonel. While serving in Vietnam he earned the Bronze Star Medal, Combat Infantryman Badge, the Meritorious Service Medal, Republic of Vietnam Cross of Gallantry and two Air Medals. Mr. Nicholson earned a master's degree from Columbia University in New York, and a law degree from the University of Denver. He practiced law in Denver, specializing in real estate, municipal finance and zoning law. In 1978 he founded Nicholson Enterprises, Inc., a developer of planned residential communities, and in 1987 he bought Renaissance Homes, which became an award-winning builder of quality custom homes.

Director Applegate's Comments on His Appointment

On February 14, 2005, I was appointed as the Director of IDVA. This was a very proud day for me, and after Governor Daniels announced my appointment, and as my family, friends, and other interested parties watched, this is what I said:

"Thank you, Governor Daniels.

"First, I want to take this opportunity to thank the members of my family who came down with me this morning. And I want to thank my friends and colleagues and all the others who came to support me today.

I especially want to acknowledge the veterans of Huntington County. I've had the privilege of serving them for the past 10 years, and I hope they feel like I did a good job for them.

I'm very honored to have been chosen by Governor Daniels to be the next Director of the Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs.

There are over 590,000 veterans in the State of Indiana.and many of them don't even know there IS a State Department of Veterans Affairs. We want to change that.

There are many Hoosier veterans who are unaware of the federal and state benefits to which they, their surviving spouse, or their children may be entitled. We want to change that.

There are many low-income, wartime veterans in Indiana who could be receiving VA pensions, and many others who could be receiving VA compensation, but are not. Thus they are forced to spend their Social Security and meager pensions on civilian health care providers and medications. We want to change THAT.

An administration staff member remarked to me two weeks ago while we were discussing the many things the Department could do for Hoosier veterans, that it was as though we had awakened a sleeping giant, known as IDVA. He was absolutely right about that. The Indiana Department of Veterans Affairs can be a tremendous force on behalf of our former and present servicemen and servicewomen. Although a small department, it has 91 satellites in the form of County Veterans Service Officers.

The sleeping giant is awake.

To paraphrase the Governor's words at the end of his Inaugural Remarks, we're ready to go to work for the veterans of Indiana.

Thank you very much."

Together, we can make these and many other things happen. One of the primary missions of this Department from this day forward is to support the County Veterans' Service Officers (CVSOs). We have done a good job of that in the past, but will do a better job of that in the future.

We want to be the place you go to when you need assistance in doing your job. We want our telephone number to be the one you call when you have questions. And we want to be the ones with the answers you need to better serve the veterans in your counties.

The appearance and contents of this newsletter is just the first visual change of the sincerity of what I've just said.

This office is available to take your telephone calls from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM daily, and we will strive to answer your question that very same day if at all possible. Whenever possible, either Deputy Director, Jim Holdeman, or myself, will be in the office at any given time to take your calls. Likewise, either Jim Kiser or Jon Brinkley, the two State Service Officers, will be here at any given time, and either Judy Holgate or Marcia Hines, along with someone from the State Approving Agency.

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New Enrollee Orientation Mandatory at Indianapolis

County Veterans Service Officers should make veterans who enroll for health care at the Indianapolis VAMC aware that they will be required to attend a new patient orientation after the VAMC receives their enrollment packet. Is there an advantage to attending this orientation? At the Richard Roudebush VAMC in Indianapolis there certainly is. Enrollees who attend the mandatory orientation will be scheduled for their initial appointment with their VA primary health care provider within just a few weeks after the orientation. Those who miss it? It could be months before they're scheduled.

CVSOs, please get this information out to your county veterans. When it comes right down to it, the veterans who attend the orientation, regardless of where they're going to receive their care, are much better informed than those who don't.

Scam Targets Families of Service Members Killed in Action

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 22, 2005 -- Officials with the Department of Homeland Security are warning the public about two new Iraq-related Internet scams, including one directed at the relatives of fallen U.S. soldiers.

"These new Internet fraud schemes are among the worst we have ever encountered," said Michael J. Garcia, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "Most troubling is the fact that some are targeting the relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. We are also concerned about the fact that these criminals are impersonating (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agents and referring to ICE's official Web Site in an effort to steal money from Americans who have lost loved ones."

The first scheme involves e-mail sent to relatives of U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq. Claiming to be a volun-

teer working with U.S. forces, the sender states that a late friend, who also was a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, was a very good friend of the relatives' slain son or daughter. The sender then goes on to ask for assistance in obtaining funds kept for them by the deceased friend, promising more details when the relative responds to the e-mail. The sender then adds a link to the portion of Immigration and Customs Enforcement's actual Web Site discussing ICE operations in Iraq.

In the second scheme, a blanket e-mail is being distributed that claims to be from an Immigration and Customs Enforcement official in Iraq who is responsible for tracking down funds looted from the Iraqi Central Bank by Saddam Hussein's son. The sender lists ICE's Web Site address in the e-mail in an effort to seem credible. The sender then asks for confirmation of the e-mail address of the recipient, stating, "there is a very important and confidential matter which I want us both to discuss".

The ICE Cyber Crimes Center in northern Virginia, in conjunction with the ICE Office of Professional Responsibility here, is investigating the schemes. Those who receive the bogus e-mail solicitations should ignore and delete them, Garcia said.

(From a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement news release.)

Air Force Aid Society Scholarships Offered

Air Force Aid Society officials said they are offering as many as 4,500 college education grants to Air Force family members through the Gen. Henry H. Arnold Education Grant Program. Applications for the \$1,500 need-based grants must be received by March 11 annually. The program is open to dependent children of airmen on active duty, in the Guard or Reserve performing full-time active duty, retired or deceased. Spouses of active duty and deceased airmen are also eligible. Applicants must be enrolled as full-time undergraduates at an accredited college or university during the 2005-2006 academic year, and they are required to maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average.

Selection is heavily based on cost of attendance, family income and the number of eligible applicants competing. A final need assessment will be made by an

independent agency. Students can find an application and review full eligibility requirements, procedures and application instructions on the society's Web Site at www.afas.org. They also can call (800) 429-9475 for an application brochure. The program averages a 50 percent-plus selection rate, officials said.

House Panel's Views on VA Budget Turn Partisan

By Chuck Conlon and David Clarke, Congressional Quarterly Staff

Republicans and Democrats on the House Veterans' Affairs Committee have offered starkly different takes on President Bush's budget request for the Department of Veterans Affairs — a change from past years when they largely agreed.

Their ideas are expressed in "views and estimates" letters to the Budget Committee, which lay out where they stand on the President's fiscal 2006 request.

Committee Republicans, under the direction of new Chairman Steve Buyer, R-Ind., say it is time to focus more on disabled, poor and special-needs veterans and less on veterans whose health issues are not related to their military service. Republicans, noting the ongoing war on terror, say VA health care funding should be increased \$434.2 million above the President's request. Democrats, meanwhile, say the VA health care system needs another \$3 billion just to meet demand for current services and medical inflation.

GOP panel leaders embraced President Bush's concept of having some veterans without service-connected disabilities pay an annual \$250 enrollment fee. The concept of enrollment fees has been dismissed by Congress in the past.

Both Republicans and Democrats rejected Bush's call to increase co-payments for prescription drugs, as well as his proposal to cut federal spending for state-run homes that provide long-term care.

Source: Congressional Quarterly Today

Army Retiree Mobilization Program

The Army is expanding its program to bring volunteer retirees back to active duty. Coming on the heels of some 320 retirees who signed up last year, officials expect to reactivate more than 500 this year. Ages generally will range from the mid-40s to the late 60s, although some retirees older in age may be accepted

Officials have developed three categories from a list of 4,500 retirees who have completed applications: first - 1,000 retirees in good physical condition who have been retired less than five years; second – 2,000 in good physical shape who have been retired no more than 10 years; and third - some 1,500 who are older than 60 and who have disabilities. The Army also is sorting through a list of 3,000 retirees to whom they are offering a chance to volunteer as recruiters or civil affairs officers.

You can volunteer for pre-assignment to specific locations, commands or agencies to fill mobilization position at partial mobilization or above. Voluntary pre-assignments to specific mobilization positions will remain in force until your 70th birthday. The current process of pre-assignment equates to the earmarking of computer records. Retiree requirements and records are reviewed monthly and those who are most recently retired (retirees with current skills and knowledge of Army systems and procedures) with needed grade and military skill are selected to fill the positions. Pre-assignments are changed frequently; therefore, retirees are not notified of their change in assignment. Retiree pre-assignment or Hip Pocket Orders ceased to exist in August 1996.

HRC St. Louis no longer produces paper orders unless it receives a recall to active duty. Retirees are preassigned to mobilization positions for recall to active duty in support of an expansion of the nation's military forces. You can request voluntary recall for contingency operation or pre-assignment (Reservists not yet age 60 and Regular Army Retirees) in writing, by telephone or e-mail. Your request must include your desired location, installation or major command. Contact the U.S. Army Human Resources Command, ATTN: AHRC-PAP-A, 1 Reserve Way, St. Louis, MO 63132-5200; Tel: (800)325-2660; Fax (314) 592-0532, or E-mail to: mobops@hrcstl.army.mil.

In addition, a new self-service tool on the My Record www.2xCitizen.usar.army.mil portal area of-

fers an online volunteer option for interested Reserve soldiers. The Interactive Voice Response (IVR) System also enables a soldier to volunteer. [Source: Armed Forces News 28 JAN 05 and https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/reserve/]

Army Creates Close Combat Badge

By Lisa Burges reporting in Army Times 15 Feb 05

After 60 years of debate, and in response to requests from field commanders, the U.S. Army has announced a new badge for non-infantry soldiers in combat arms brigades that recognizes their direct participation in ground combat.

The new badge will be the equivalent of the Army's Combat Infantry Badge (CIB) which was created in 1943. The CIB, in the form of a rifle surrounded by a wreath, is reserved for infantry and Special Forces soldiers only. The Close Combat Badge (CCB) will be awarded to soldiers with military occupational specialties in armor, the cavalry, combat engineering, and field artillery. Officers must have a branch or specialty recognized in Army regulations as having a high probability to routinely engage in direct combat. The CCB will be presented only to soldiers who are engaged in active ground combat moving to contact and destroy the enemy with direct fire.

All soldiers are allowed to wear their unit patch on their right shoulder as a combat patch after spending 30 days in an authorized combat theater. While prestigious, the display of this unit patch as a combat designator does not necessarily indicate that the wearer was involved in direct ground fighting. That is the purpose of the CIB and a Combat Medical Badge which is reserved for service medics. These were the only two Army symbols that indicate that the wearer has come under direct enemy fire.

Combat badges are different from military medals. Medals and the ribbons that represent them are worn only on a soldier's mess dress and Class "A" and "B" uniforms, never on battle dress uniforms (BDUs). The badges, which are rectangular pieces of metal, when worn on the dress or Class "A" and "B" uniforms, are also worn as a fabric patch above the right-hand breast pocket of the BDUs and act as a visual recognition of close combat whenever a soldier is in uniform.

A Mar 05 administrative message is forthcoming that will formally outline the exact rules and regula-

tions. The new badge should be available this fall through unit supply and also for purchase in military clothing sales stores. The proposed criteria for the CCB award are:

- Colonel or below for officers; all enlisted soldiers are eligible.
- Enlisted must have a Military Occupational Specialty in Armor or Cavalry (CMF 19), Artillery (CMF 13), or Combat Engineer (CMF 12).
- Officers must have a branch or specialty officially recognized in Army Regulation 611-1 as having a high probability to routinely engage in direct combat.
- Recipients must be assigned or attached to an Army brigade or smaller unit that is purposely organized to routinely conduct close combat operations and engage in direct combat in accordance with existing Army rules and policy.
- Recipients must be under fire while engaged in active ground combat, to moving into contact and destroy the enemy with direct fire. Battle or campaign participation is not sufficient to qualify for this award; the unit must have been in active ground combat.
- If all other criteria are met, eligibility may include other services and foreign soldiers assigned to Army units of brigade and below.

[Source: U.S. Army & Stars & Stripes Lisa Burgess article 15 FEB 05]

Vet Centers Expand Grief Counseling to Military Families

(American Forces Press Service) In an unprecedented expansion of its traditional client base, the Department of Veterans Affairs is offering grief counseling to families of service members who die while on active duty. VA's Office of Readjustment Counseling offers the counseling services at its 206 community-based Vet Centers throughout the United States, including Guam, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Greg Harms, program analyst for the counseling program, said 412 military family members - from spouses to children to siblings, parents and even grand-parents - have taken advantage of the program as they struggle to cope with the loss of their 276 service members. Most were killed during deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Expanding its services to serve veterans' families represents "quite a leap and a real innovation" for VA, acknowledged Charles Flora, associate program director. But he calls the offering of bereavement counseling to family members "a natural extension of what we already do for veterans".

The program also serves families of reservists and National Guardsmen who die while activated for federal duty.

Some families seek the VA's counseling services immediately after learning of their loved ones' loss, while others wait until later, often after an important milestone such as a birthday, holiday or the one-year anniversary of the death has passed, Harms said.

"Everyone grieves differently. It runs the full gamut" he said. "There are no standard operating procedures for grief."

As a result, services offered run the full range, from one or two-time visits to weekly sessions, depending on the family member's needs.

Regardless of the level of help needed, the VA service offers all its clients a common variable: a safe, caring environment where a professional bereavement counselor helps them work through the emotional and psychological issues associated with their loss. "They're looking for support, looking for someone they can talk to who will listen and understand," Harms said. "A lot of what people need," added Flora, "is a place where they can sit down, take a breath and tell their story in a calm place where they can put things into perspective."

While all grief counselors are able to provide that service, the Vet Centers provide something many clients call a big plus. More than half the staff at the Vet Centers are veterans themselves who understand the military lifestyle as well as the tremendous sacrifice the families have made.

Counselors go out of their way to respond to families' needs, often meeting with them the same day they're contacted. They keep clinics open late to accommodate families' schedules and network with other service organizations to reach families in need. And in some cases, they even make home visits for families

who might otherwise not be able to tap into their services.

"We've made a science of overcoming every obstacle to care," Flora said. No medical diagnosis is required to seek help, and services are completely confidential. The only way a counselor can share information on a case is with written permission of the family member. "They're guaranteed clinical confidentiality," Harms said.

Flora said he considers the services the Vet Centers provide grieving military families "a sacred trust" that reflects the VA's commitment to veterans and their families. "We're meeting these families at one of the most traumatic points in their lives and helping to assist the family as it rebuilds itself," he said. "This is sacred business."

Referrals for grief counseling come through military casualty assistance offices, the VA and veterans' service organizations. The largest number of referrals comes from TAPS, the nonprofit Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, which offers what Harms calls "incredible peer-to-peer support" but no professional bereavement counseling services.

Families requesting more information or services can also contact the VA's Readjustment Counseling Service directly at (202) 273-9116 or by email at vet.center@hq.med.va.gov

Troops in Combat Areas Can Get Tax Credits

Troops deployed to combat zones now can apply for tax refunds based on earned income tax credits and additional-child tax credits, explained Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, Executive Director of the Armed Forces Tax Council. The earned income credit, Fenton explained, primarily involves lower-income filers with children. The additional-child tax credit, she added, may provide refunds for children under age 17. Service members who want to apply for the credit refunds must file a federal tax return, Fenton noted. Enlisted troops serving in combat areas already have all of their military pay excluded from federal taxes, Fenton pointed out, while officers in combat zones can exclude up to \$6,529 of their monthly pay.

Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Paid Up Provision

On 17 FEB 05 Rep. Jim Saxton introduced his bill (number not yet available), which would change the effective date of 30-year, paid-up SBP from Oct 1, 2008, to Oct 1, 2005. Congress authorized paid-up SBP coverage in 1998 for any member who attains age 70 and has paid at least 30 years of SBP premiums. But the effective date was delayed for 10 years to save money. In effect, this imposed a "Greatest Generation tax" on the oldest military retirees who enrolled when SBP was first enacted in 1972. Before that, many paid premiums under the earlier Retired Servicemen's Family Protection Plan. By late 2005, those 1972 SBP enrollees already will have paid almost 20 percent more premiums than a 1978 enrollee will ever have to pay. In the Senate, Senators Bill Nelson (D-FL) and Jon Corzine (D-NJ) have combined the SBP/DIC and paid-up SBP initiatives into a single bill, S.185.

[Source: MOAA Leg Up 18 FEB 05]

Bush Chooses Former VA Chief for BRAC Commission

By George Cahlink gcahlink@govexec.com

Former Veteran Affairs Secretary Anthony Principi will be nominated by President Bush to lead the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission, the White House has announced.

Principi, 60, stepped down as VA chief in December and now is a vice president for pharmaceutical manufacturer Pfizer Corp. Previously, the decorated Vietnam War veteran served as general counsel for the Senate Armed Services and Senate Veterans Affairs Committees. He also held an executive post with defense giant Lockheed Martin Corp.

If approved by the Senate, Principi would head a nine-member panel charged with evaluating the Pentagon's plans for closing and realigning domestic military bases. By March 15th the President and congressional leaders must submit nominees to the Senate for the BRAC panel.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn., has already nominated retired Army Gen. John Coburn and retired Adm. Harold Gehman; while House Speaker Dennis Hastert, R-Ill., has picked former Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner and former Rep. James Hansen, R-Utah.

On the Democratic side, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., has recommended former Rep. James Bilbray, D-Nev. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has only one choice, but forwarded two names, Wader Sanders, a San Diego lawyer and former Clinton administration assistant secretary of Defense, and Philip Coyle, the Pentagon's former top weapons tester.

President Bush still has two additional picks for the BRAC Commission.

In mid-May the Defense Department will make its recommendations for closures and realignments. The Commission will then hold public hearings on the list and issue its final recommendations to the President by Sept. 8th. The President must reject or accept the list within 15 days; if it meets his approval, Congress has 45 days to reject it before it becomes law.

Birth Certificates for Child Born Abroad

An approved Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States of America (Form FS-240) is evidence that a child acquired United States citizenship at birth. This form is a basic citizenship document and is issued on specially designed safety paper with preprinted serial numbers. Multiple copies of the form cannot be issued. In order to obtain a replacement document for a lost, stolen or mutilated FS 240 a notarized affidavit explaining the circumstance of the loss/theft/mutilation of the original must be provided to:

Department of State Passport Services Correspondence Branch 1111 19th St., N.W., Suite 510 Washington D.C. 20522-1705

The written request should include: (1) full name of the child at birth (plus any adoptive names); (2) date

and place of birth; (3) Names of parents; (4) serial passport information; (6) signature of the requester; and (7) the notarized affidavit explaining the circumstances.

or money order payable to the Department of State. The replacement document will have the number of the original document followed by a dash and a number indicating that this is not the original issuance.

A U. S. Citizen child born overseas is not required to register his or her birth with any state, county, or municipal authority in the United States

Director's Comments (continued from page 2)

The training of new Service Officers will be taken over by our office, will occur on a monthly basis, as required, and there will no longer be a need to conduct this training during the IDVA Conference. No new service officer will go more than 30 days without receiving the information they need to do their jobs.

If you have veteran outreach programs, we want to number of the FS-240 (if available); (5) any available help. We don't want to force our unwanted program on you.

By the time you get this newsletter you may have The fee for a replacement copy is \$30.00, by check already received one or more of the IDVA News Releases I intend to send you periodically. Some CVSOs have access to information which is beneficial to their veterans, but others do not. We intend to make sure that every service officer in every county receives the same breaking newsworthy information. We will provide this information via e-mail to those who have it and by regular mail to those who don't. Service Officers who would like to share news with other CVSOs should send it here and let us review it for release from our office.

> My office door is always open and I welcome telephone calls from CVSOs. The office telephone number is 800-400-4520 and my cell number is 317-224-6653. Visit or call anytime you have a problem you think I can help with.

Together, we can make it happen. It's a great time to be a veteran in Indiana.